Monitoring Progress and Outcomes

Tracking the Action Plan (Inputs, Outputs—the Upper Left and Right Quadrants)

From the moment the SAC members and partners begin to make the Action Plan come to life, there are basic questions they must ask and answer as part of their accountability responsibilities:

- Are the elements of the plan being implemented on time?
- Are they being implemented in the way they were intended?
- Are they being done well? [1]

From the perspectives of the Logic Model and Performance Measures Quadrants, the companion questions are:

- Did we invest what we said we would?
   (Inputs/resources)
- Did we do the activities we said we would?
   (outputs/Upper Left Quadrant—how much did we do)
- Did we reach the population we said we would?
   (outputs/Upper Left Quadrant—how much did we do)
- Did we do it well?
   (Upper Right Quadrant—how well did we do it)[2]

It is vital to keep track on a continuous basis of what was actually done and how well it was done. The tracking can be done informally (ask yourself, chat with friends and other people), as well as formally, through surveys and other evaluation methods.[3] If the Action Plan provides the basic information on who is to do what when and with what resources, then it will be a fairly straightforward matter to determine accomplishments and timeliness. A common format for plan information can be helpful in organizing this information.[4] (**Prototype Implementation Plan Format** in the "Tools" section is an example of a format that could be used by all.)

Answering the question of quality of effort is a key part of performance measurement and accountability. For the plan as a whole, as well as for each element of the plan, there should be a set of "headline" performance measures—those three to five measures that best explain the program to others (see "Developing and Implementing an Action Plan"). Some of the "headlines" should be from the Upper Right Quadrant. These "headlines" become the basis for reporting, reviewing performance, and agreeing on changes in practice, as necessary. No good plan is static, and there must be a regular (i.e., monthly or quarterly), structured and thoughtful process whereby the SAC members and partners can assess overall progress and make midcourse corrections. A standard format for structuring progress reporting can help in this effort.[5] (**Result: Long Term Family Self Sufficiency Quarterly Progress Report** in the "Tools" section provides an example of a performance accountability reporting format.)

Tools for this Section: Prototype Implementation Plan Format, Result: Long Term Family Self-Sufficiency Quarterly Progress Report

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Evaluating Program Outcomes (Short- and Medium-term Outcomes—The Lower Left/Right Quadrants)

The next vital performance question for the SAC members and partners is this: *Is the plan making a difference?* And the correlated question is: *Does the plan need to be changed?* These are the questions derived from the Lower Left and Lower Right Performance Measure Quadrants:

- Is Anyone Better Off? (Quantity/Effect)
  (Lower Left Quadrant: Numbers—How much change for the better did we produce)
- Is Anyone Better Off? (Quality/Effect)
  (Lower Right Quadrant: What quality—i.e., Percentage—of change for the better did we produce—Skills/Knowledge, Attitude, Behavior, Circumstance)[6]

Incorporating the Logic Model perspective, the companion questions are:

- What are the short term results—the Learning accomplished?
- What are the medium term results—the Action adopted?[7]

The periodic progress report format discussed in the previous section can also help in finding the answers to these "making a difference" questions. Generally, there are four different types of progress that can be reported on a regular basis:

- An actual **turning of one or more curves**.
  (This is the rarest event to be reported—when it is possible to see a change in direction away from the baseline.)
- An **improvement in client results** which contributes to turning the curve(s).
  (This is a report on the effects of a program, agency or service system on the well-being of clients or customers, as a contribution to turning the curve on population well-being.)
- An **accomplishment**.
  (This is a report on a task or set of tasks in the implementation plan that has been completed, or it may include some other achievement or event outside the implementation plan, like an award or recognition in the press.)
- An **anecdote**.
  (A story of how a specific person's life actually got better. This kind of reporting makes the connection back to how we experience well-being. It brings to life the meaning of data on progress.)[8]

Using these progress reports, SAC members and partners will be able to answer the outcome questions for the purposes of managing the general direction of the initiative and continuing to do what it takes to turn the curve on the well-being of the target population. But there will always be more to consider and more to do.[9] But when it comes to attributing cause and effect, the SAC members and partners will need to rely on formal evaluations. Evaluations take performance measurement to a higher level.

It may be helpful further explore the relationship between performance measurement, performance accountability, and evaluation. Performance accountability and evaluation both make use of performance measures. Performance accountability is a continuing management and oversight process that makes use of many sources of information, including evaluation findings, to manage the program, track performance, report to stakeholders, and improve performance. This is a "real world" process, pragmatic and sometimes political, using whatever information can be obtained, going on gut instinct when no information is available, doing whatever it takes to make the program work.

Performance accountability requires the collection and use of data on a regular basis, with regular, continuous reports. The process relies on existing data before any new data is collected. Also, this process relies on the smallest possible data set which can be used to run the program. Performance accountability may use 100% reporting and sampling, as well as anecdote, hunch, and instinct. The process is carried out by program staff themselves, usually with minimal additional expense.[10] Good performance accountability systems are **simple**, rely on **common sense**, use **plain language** and a **minimum of paper**, and are **useful to mangers** in particular.[11]

As part of the performance accountability process, when a more structured, disciplined analysis of how well a program is working or has worked is called for, the SAC members and partners will need to use formal *evaluations*. Evaluations can be designed to differentiate the effect a program has on client outcomes from other "outside" factors (cause and effect). Evaluation results may be used by funders or others to make judgments about whether a program should continue to be funded, whether it should be changed, and whether it is worth replicating. Evaluations are rigorous and designed to stand up to academic scrutiny. They generally rely on one-time—often extensive—data collection and reporting. But they provide the means to take data-based judgments about performance to a higher, more rigorous level, and to get concrete information on cause and effect relationships.[12]

Evaluation may look at inputs and outputs and/or outcomes and long-term impact. *Formative evaluation* answers inputs and outputs questions:
- What aspects of our situation most shaped our ability to do the work we set out to do in our community?
- What did our program accomplish in our community?

Summative Evaluation answers outcomes and impact questions:
- What is our assessment of what resulted from our work in the community?
- What have we learned about doing this kind of work in a community like ours?[13]

To make sure the evaluation—whether formative or summative—is well focused, and makes best use of available data, the SAC members and partners will want to develop systematically a series of questions, keeping in mind the audience, the type of question appropriate to the focus area, and the use of the information. For example, different audiences will want to know different kinds of information[14]:

Audience	Typical Questions	Evaluation Use
Program Management and Staff	Are we reaching our target population? Are our participants satisfied with our program? Is the program being run efficiently? How can we improve our program?	Programming decisions, day-to-day operations
Participants	Programming decisions, day-to-day operations Did the program help me and people like me? What would improve the program next time?	Decisions about continuing participation
Community Members	Is the program suited to our community needs? What is the program really accomplishing?	Decisions about participation and support
Public Officials	Who is the program serving? What difference has the program made? Is the program reaching its target population? What do participants think about the program? Is the program worth the cost?	Decisions about commitment and support Knowledge about the utility and feasibility of the program approach
Funders	Is what was promised being achieved? Is the program working? Is the program worth the cost?	Accountability and improvement of future grant making efforts

The SAC members and partners may find it helpful for to invite members of the various audiences that may use the proposed evaluation to assist in delineating questions along the focus areas of inputs, outputs and outcomes. Their involvement can help ensure that the necessary data can be gathered.   It will also be important for the SAC members and partners to carefully plan the evaluation so that the right questions are answered, the evaluation is kept as simple as possible, and the evaluation process does not adversely affect the day-to-day operations. (***Evaluate to Check Performance, Evaluation Plan, Flowchart for Indicators*** in the "Tools" section provide formats that can be applied to the planning process.) Evaluations may be conducted "in-house" if there are staff with the necessary skills and knowledge of evaluation techniques, or they may be carried out by outside experts. In either case, careful planning is essential.

Tools for this Section: Evaluate to Check Performance, Evaluation Plan, Flowchart for Indicators

Evaluating Community Indicators Over Time (Long-term Outcome/Impact—The Lower Right Quadrant—Are the Curves Turning?)

The ultimate answer to the question "Are we making a difference—is the curve turning?" lies in the community-level indicators. These indicators will be the ones chosen in the earlier process of "Picking the Curve(s) to Turn." It is here that the SAC members and

partners (and others) can judge the full value of their health improvement initiative's contribution to the well-being of the community. Looking at the community-level indicators provides an objective way to measure and assess the bottom-line evidence and the progress—if any—toward the desired result. Ideally, the SAC members and partners will incorporate measurement of the community-level indicators early on and throughout their performance accountability process. This on-going review and "broader picture" will enable them to change things around as necessary. [15]

There are five main steps to evaluating community-level indicators:
1. Select the indicators that are available, accurate, possible to collect, and sensitive to the initiative.
2. Contact the relevant local and state agencies to find the data.
3. Compile, summarize, and graph the data—e.g., graphing the numbers at six-month intervals, for comparison of the initiative's presence with changes in the numbers.
4. Present the data to the participating organizations and the community—to inform and educate.
5. Use the data to evaluate and redirect the initiative's efforts. [16]

Initiating Revisions/New Activities/Measures

The goal of performance accountability is continually to try and do things better. Throughout the SAC members and partners' performance accountability process, information will be gathered which can be used to redirect current efforts, start new activities, or perhaps establish new measures. (***The Seven Questions Central to Performance Accountability*** in the "Tools" section provides an organizing framework the SAC members and partners can use at every turn to help stay on track.)

The SAC members and partners will need to find a way to consider new information and incorporate changes while maintaining the integrity of the results-oriented thinking process. (***Families and Children Inc. board of Directors Meeting Agenda*** in the "Tools" section offers an example of how this review process can be carried out by the relevant decision makers.) A complementary model that addresses the idea of continual improvement is the "**Plan, Do, Check, Act, Analyze**" model often used in quality performance management (TQM) efforts:
- *Plan*—examine the emerging "customer" needs and use that information to plan the service/activity.
- *Do*—design the service/activity to be consistent with the plan and to meet the identified customer needs.
- *Check*—compare the details and overall shape of the service/activity to the plan to see if it will meet the needs and is feasible and ready to go.
- *Act*—run the service/activity.
- *Analyze*—look at what is being done and evaluating it on the basis of the original plan.

- *Restart the cycle*—the "Analyze" step becomes the "Plan" step for the next round, and leads, where necessary, to rethinking and reworking the program or initiative.[17]

Tools for this Section: The Seven Questions Central to Performance Accountability, Families and Children Inc. Board of Directors Meeting Agenda

Notes

[1] Adapted from: "How do we oversee the implementation of a results-based plan?" in M. Friedman, The Results and Performance Accountability Implementation Guide, Fiscal Policies Studies Institute, 2002. Retrieved 10/1/2002 from the World Wide Web: http://www.raguide.org

[2] Adapted from: "What is the difference between population well-being (results accountability) and client well-being (performance accountability) and why is it important?" in M. Friedman, The Results and Performance Accountability Implementation Guide, Fiscal Policies Studies Institute, 2002. Retrieved 7/12/2002 from the World Wide Web: http://www.raguide.org and E. Taylor-Powell, "Logic Model: Program Performance Framework" in Logic Model Workshop, University of Wisconsin-Extension, Madison, Wisconsin, 12/5/2001, p. 4. Retrieved 9/24/2002 from the World Wide Web: http://www.uwex.edu/ces/pdande/evaluation/pdf/LMworkshopA.pdf

[3] KU Work Group on Health Promotion and Community Development. (2000). Chapter 8, Section 5: Developing an Action Plan. Lawrence, KS: University of Kansas. Retrieved 8/12/2002 from the World Wide Web: http://ctb.ukans.edu/tools/EN/sub_section_main_1089.htm

[4] Adapted from: "How do we oversee the implementation of a results-based plan?" in M. Friedman, The Results and Performance Accountability Implementation Guide, op. cit

[5] Ibid.

[6] Adapted from: "How do we help people identify performance measures for their program or service?" in M. Friedman, The Results and Performance Accountability Implementation Guide, Fiscal Policies Studies Institute, 2002. Retrieved 7/12/2002 from the World Wide Web: http://www.raguide.org

[7] Adapted from: E. Taylor-Powell, "Logic Model: Program Performance Framework" in Logic Model Workshop, op. cit

[8] Adapted from: "How do we report on progress?" in M. Friedman, The Results and Performance Accountability Implementation Guide, Fiscal Policies Studies Institute, 2002. Retrieved 10/1/2002 from the World Wide Web: http://www.raguide.org

[9] Adapted from: "How do we oversee the implementation of a results-based plan?" in M. Friedman, The Results and Performance Accountability Implementation Guide, op. cit

[10] Adapted from "What is the relationship between performance measurement, performance accountability and evaluation?" in M. Friedman, The Results and Performance Accountability Implementation Guide, Fiscal Policies Studies Institute, 2002. Retrieved 10/23/2002 from the World Wide Web: http://www.raguide.org

[11] Adapted from "How do we create a performance improvement system in our organization?" in M. Friedman, The Results and Performance Accountability Implementation Guide, Fiscal Policies Studies Institute, 2002. Retrieved 7/12/2002 from the World Wide Web: http://www.raguide.org

[12] Adapted from: "What is the relationship between performance measurement, performance accountability and evaluation?" in M. Friedman, <u>The Results and Performance Accountability Implementation Guide</u>, op. cit

[13] Adapted from: W.K. Kellogg Foundation, Chapter 4: "Using Your Logic Model to Plan for Evaluation," in <u>Logic Model Development Guide</u>, Battle Creek, Michigan, 2001, p. 36. Retrieved 9/24/2002 from the Wide World Web: http://www.wkkf.org/pubs/Pub3669.pdf

[14] Table adapted from: W.K. Kellogg Foundation, Chapter 4: "Using Your Logic Model to Plan for Evaluation," in <u>Logic Model Development Guide</u>, op. cit., p. 40.

[15] Discussion adapted from: KU Work Group on Health Promotion and Community Development. (2000). Chapter 38, Section 9: Gathering and Using community-Level Indicators. Lawrence, KS: University of Kansas. Retrieved 8/12/2002 from the World Wide Web: http://ctb.ukans.edu/tools/EN/sub_section_main_1371.htm

[16] Ibid.

[17] Model adapted from: KU Work Group on Health Promotion and Community Development. (2000). Chapter 40, Section 1: Achieving and Maintaining Quality Performance. Lawrence, KS: University of Kansas. Retrieved 8/12/2002 from the World Wide Web: http://ctb.ukans.edu/tools/EN/sub_section_main_1387htm

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Tools

Prototype Implementation Plan Format

Task Description (goals & objectives)	Responsibility		Schedule		Status
	Primary	Secondary	Start	Complete	

From "How do we oversee the implementation of a results-based plan?" in M. Friedman, <u>The Results and Performance Accountability Implementation Guide</u>, Fiscal Policy Studies Institute, 2002. Retrieved 7/12/2002 from the World Wide Web: http://www.raguide.org. Used by permission.

Result: Long Term Family Self Sufficiency

Quarterly Progress Report
The Highest Level "Stockholder's" View

Indicator baselines:
New data on the 4 or 5 most important curves we're trying to turn (Plus attached progress on the Data Development Agenda).

Story behind the baselines:
New information on causes, from national or local sources.

Partners:
New partners we've been able to bring to the table since the last report.

What works:
New information on what works to improve self sufficiency, from national or local sources. (Plus attached progress on the Research Agenda).

Action plan changes (if any):
Given the above, any changes we propose to make in the strategy, action plan and budget.

Progress against the plan:
Four kinds of progress, in addition to standard financial reporting.
(Note programs would report only on items 2 through 4):

1. Population Well-being: Turning the curve on an indicator: Actual movement for the better away from the baseline. *For example: Last quarter there was an increase in the percentage of workers earning a living wage, reversing a 4 year trend of decline. For example: The rate of growth in the rate of teen pregnancy slowed from the previous 2 years.*

2. Program/ service performance which contributes to turning the curve: Performance measures for providers which show that their clients have made progress. *For example: Last quarter program X placed 75% of its clients in jobs (900 people in total) and 95% of these placements were at living wage rates.*

3. Accomplishments: Positive activities, not included above. *For example: We opened a new neighborhood jobs center. Our family health program received a national award and positive recognition in the press. The RFP process is on schedule.*

4. Anecdotes: Stories beneath the statistics which show how individuals are better off. *Let me tell you about John and Mary Jones...*

FPSI: June, 2000
Rev. Sept, 2002

From: "How do we oversee the implementation of a results-based plan?" in M. Friedman, The Results and Performance Accountability Implementation Guide, Fiscal Policy Studies Institute, 2002. Retrieved 7/12/2002 from the World Wide Web: http://www.raguide.org. Used by permission.

Evaluate to Check Performance[*]

INPUTS	OUTPUTS	OUTCOMES - IMPACT

DATA COLLECTION: - What information do you need to document performance?

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[*] From: E. Taylor-Powell, "Evaluate to Check Performance" in Logic Model Workshop, University of Wisconsin-Extension, Madison, Wisconsin, 12/5/2001, p. 52. Retrieved 9/24/2002 from the World Wide Web: http://www.uwex.edu/ces/pdande/evaluation/pdf/LMworkshopB.pdf

Evaluation Plan[*]

FOCUSING THE EVALUATION		COLLECTING THE INFORMATION		
WHAT DO WE WANT TO KNOW? The evaluation questions	HOW WILL WE KNOW IT? Indicators-evidence	SOURCES Who will have this information?	METHODS How will we get the information?	SCHEDULE: When will the information be collected?

Continued Next Page

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[*] From: E. Taylor-Powell, "Evaluate to Check Performance" in <u>Logic Model Workshop</u>, University of Wisconsin-Extension, Madison, Wisconsin, 12/5/2001, p. 52. Retrieved 9/24/2002 from the World Wide Web: http://www.uwex.edu/ces/pdande/evaluation/pdf/LMworkshopB.pdf

Evaluation Plan (Continued)

USING THE INFORMATION			MANAGING THE INFORMATION		
How will the data be analyzed?	How will the data be interpreted?	How will results be communica-ted? To whom? How? When?	Responsibili-ties	Timeline	Resources needed

Flowchart for Indicators[*]

Focus Area	Question	Indicators	Technical Assistance Needed
1	2	3	4

Column 1: Focus Area—Include the areas on which your evaluation will focus into this column (for example, inputs, outputs, outcomes, impact).

Column 2: Question—Include the big questions your key audiences want answered. Remember to keep your evaluation as simple as possible.

Column 3: Indicators—Specify the indicators (types of data) against which you will measure the success /progress of your program. Record the sources of data you plan to use as indicators (where you are likely to find or get access to these data).

Column 4: Technical Assistance—To what extent does your organization have the evaluation and data management expertise needed to collect and analyze the data that related to each indicator? List any assistance that would be helpful—universities, consultants, national and state data experts, foundation evaluation departments, etc.

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[*] Adapted from: W.K. Kellogg Foundation, Chapter 4: "Using Your Logic Model to Plan for Evaluation," in Logic Model Development Guide, Battle Creek, Michigan, 2001, p. 46. Retrieved 9/24/2002 from the Wide World Web: http://www.wkkf.org/pubs/Pub3669.pdf.

The Seven Questions Central to Performance Accountability[*]

> **Performance Accountability for Programs Agencies and Service Systems**
>
> **1. Who are our customers, clients, people we serve? (e.g., children in a child care program)**
>
> **2. How can we measure if our customers/clients are better off? (performance measures about client results - e.g., percent of children with good literacy skills)**
>
> **3. How can we measure if we are delivering service well? (e.g., client staff ratio, unit cost, turnover rate etc.)**
>
> **4. How are we doing on the most important of these measures? Where have we been; where are we headed? (baselines and the story behind the baselines)**
>
> **5. Who are the partners who have a potential role to play in doing better?**
>
> **6. What works, what could work to do better than baseline? (best practices, best hunches, including partners' contributions)**
>
> **7. What do we propose to do? (multi-year action plan and budget, including no-cost and low-cost items)**
>
> **- FPSI**

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[*] From "What are the basic ideas behind performance accountability?" in M. Friedman, The Results and Performance Accountability Implementation Guide, Fiscal Policy Studies Institute, 2002. Retrieved 7/12/2002 from the World Wide Web: http://www.raguide.org. Used by permission.

From: "How do we oversee the implementation of a results-based plan?" in M. Friedman, <u>The Results and Performance Accountability Implementation Guide</u>, Fiscal Policy Studies Institute, 2002. Retrieved 7/12/2002 from the World Wide Web: http://www.raguide.org. Used by permission.